In this connection it may, however, be stated that ensuring payment of cane price dues is the direct responsibility of the State Governments, who have the necessary field organisations and powers to enforce such payments. The Central Government monitors the position, and issues directions to State Governments, from time to time, for expeditious clearance of cane price arrears. The State Governments had been advised to keep a watch on cane price payments from the beginning of the season itself.

The Central Government, on its part, has been taking steps aimed at improving the liquidity of the industry to enable it to pay the cane dues. The steps taken over the last 2-3 years include liberalisation of bank credit facilities, reduction in bank margins on credit against sugar stocks, change in the method of valuation of sugar stocks to the benefit of the industry, judicious monthly releases of free-sale sugar for maintaining desired levels of prices, creation of buffer stocks against which the industry was entitled to 100 per cent credit in addition to holding costs, etc. Besides, ways and means advances had also been granted to a few States in the context of high cane price arrears in those States.

Fall in sugar production

445. SHRI ALADI ARUNA alias V. ARUNACHALAM: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether production of sugar has declined during the last two years; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government to meet the shortage?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (RAO BIRENDRA SINGH): (a) There has been a decline in sugar production to 59.16 lakh tonnes in 1983-84 and to about 61 lakh tonnes in 1984-85 season from the record production of about 84 and 82 lakh tonnes in 1981-82 and 1982-83 seasons.

(b) To ensure adequate availability of sugar for internal consumption it has been decided for the present to import 10 lakh tonnes of sugar in the financial year 1985-86. Major portion of the imported sugar is being allocated to the State Governments for distribution in open market at below Rs. 6 per kilogram and Food Corporation of India is also selling stocks against auction/tender in the open market. In addition, certain additional quantities of levy sugar are being envisaged for release as special festival quota to take care of increased demand during festivals. Thus, the available indigenous sugar together with the stock of imported sugar is expected to ensure adequate supplies of sugar for meeting the requirement of internal consumption and to help in keeping prices at reasonable levels.

I.F.W.J's request on verification of memberships of unions

446. SHRIMATI KRISHNA KAUL: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether I.F.W.J. have requested Government to verify the membership of I.F.W.J. and NUJ in order to decide the question of representation of wage board; and

(b) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI T. ANJAIAH): (a) and (b) Fresh verification of the membership of I.F.W.J. and N.U.J. was one of the suggestions made by the representatives of the I.F.W.J. during the course of a series of meetings held in the Ministry of Labour with the representatives of the two bodies. As the fresh verification would have delayed the constitution of the Wage Board which would not have been in the larger interests of the working journalists community, the I.F.W.J. agreed to nominate a person who has been included on the Wage Board.